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## THE AEAEAN ISLE

*A Classical Allusion in Poe*

In one of the poems of Edgar Allan Poe there is an allusion that seems to be evidently classical:

To F—

Beloved! amid the earnest woes  
That crowd around my earthly path—  
(Drear path, alas! where grows  
Not even one lonely rose)—  
My soul at least a solace hath  
In dreams of thee, and therein knows  
An Eden of bland repose.

And thus thy memory is to me  
Like some enchanted far-off isle  
In some tumultuous sea—  
Some ocean throbbing far and free  
With storms—but where meanwhile  
Serenest skies continually  
Just o'er that one bright island smile.

Without doubt we have here a direct reference to the Aeaeon Isle. On the one hand the poet pictures the turbulence and unrest of the sea, that quality that inspired the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "There is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet"<sup>1</sup>, on the other hand the sequestered peace and repose of the enchanted island. It is helpful to compare this poem, To F—, with the youthful poem, To Helen. In each it would appear that the author is implying a likeness between himself and Odysseus, and the fact that we find this apparent motif in the later of the two poems would tend to support the view that the earlier poem should be emended to read 'Phaeacian' instead of "Nicean" in the second line<sup>2</sup>. But this is anticipating. Nevertheless, it is a fact that in both poems Poe figures himself forth as a way-worn wanderer. In the poem with which we are dealing particularly the allusion to Aeaea seems to be beyond question. It may be well in this connection to recall the words spoken by Circe to Odysseus in the enchanted realm "Where that Aeaeon isle forgets the Main":

"Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, no more now wake this plenteous weeping: myself I know of all the pains ye endured upon the teeming deep, and the great despite done you by unkindly men upon the land. Nay come, eat ye meat and drink wine, till your spirit shall return to you again, as it was when first ye left your own country of rugged Ithaca; but now are ye wasted and wanting heart, mindful evermore of your sore wandering, nor has your heart ever been merry, for very grievous hath been your trial"<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremiah 49.23.

<sup>2</sup>Compare A Classical Allusion in Poe, Modern Language Notes 31. 184-185.

<sup>3</sup>Odyssey 10. 456-465, translated by Butcher and Lang.

## HUMANISTIC IMITATIONS OF LUCRETII

In THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 12.7, I quoted Munro's mention of the frequent imitations of Lucretius in the Hymni Naturales of Marullus. Jacopo Sannazaro refers to the same fact (before 1528), Eleg. 2.2:

Nec gemat exilium Spartani Musa Marulli,  
ventura ad nostras ingeniosa dapes,  
verba sed antiqui reddat numerosque Lucreti,  
dum magnis divos laudibus accumulat.

In Baptista Mantuanus's Nicolaus Tolentinus (on the life of St. Nicholas of Tolentino) 2.197-225 (1509), there is a passage which seems to show an acquaintance with the Lucretian theory of *simulacra* in the Fourth Book:

Quinque viis, tanquam speculis, per corpora (sensus dicimus) ad mentem subeunt tenuissima rerum pro rebus, simulachra modis gradientia miris. Nam species a rebus eunt, velut ire videmus a Phebo et stellis radios; per inania missae undique circumeunt auras, et lumina fallunt. Testantur rerum effigies in flumine visae in speculis, visa in saxis specularibus ora nostra fidem faciunt; vis haec incognita rebus. Mens igitur missas species, si lumina somnus non ligat, agnoscit; quod si sopor occupat artus, non agnoscit eas, sed res putat, illius instar qui putat inspectas animantia vera figuras. Hinc igitur veniunt animos agitantia nostros somnia quae, volucris dum mobilitate feruntur illae agiles formae, fingunt quaecumque per orbem conari Natura potest, quaecumque voluntas, non nunquam maiora etiam; nam monstra videmur cernere quae Natura nequit producere, montes ire per aërios tractus, hominemque volatu tendere per nubes, et currere flumina retro. Hac lemures persaepe pias deludere mentes arte solent, obscoena oculis dum occurrit imago vera vel in somnis, mox evigilantia corda titillare potens fragilemque inflectere sensum. Propterea somnum, castis quasi moribus hostem, oderat, et multam in noctem servare legendo insomnes oculos, saepe expectare solebat Luciferum, saepe Auroram, etc.

In Baldessar Castiglione's famous eclogue Alcon (1506), line 129,

summittitque novos tellus tibi daedala flores,  
recalls Lucretius 1.7.

In Andrea Navagero's eclogue Iolas, lines 16-18,

exultim virides ludunt armenta per herbas  
lascivique agni infirmisque artubus hoedi  
cornigeras matres per florida prata sequuntur,

recall Lucretius 1.259-261 (Navagero's other eclogue Damon was written in 1509; he died in 1529).

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